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MARY LEE, PharmD  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Pharmacy Practice  
University of Illinois  
College of Pharmacy

FRANK PALOUCZEK  
Pharmacist  
University of Illinois Hospital

ROOHOLLAH SHARIFI, MD  
Head, Section of Urology  
Department of Surgery  
University of Illinois  
Associate Professor of Surgery  
Abraham Lincoln School of Medicine  
Chicago

#### REFERENCE

1. Werner SB: Sources of supply of selected immunobiologics: 1982 (Information). *West J Med* 1982 Nov; 137:468-470

### Research on Rattlesnake Bites

TO THE EDITOR: I recently had an epitome, "Rattlesnake Bites: Current Hospital Therapy," published in the journal.<sup>1</sup>

As I reread the article in its published form, I note one sentence of possible misunderstanding. On page 411, the last sentence on the page reads "today we have cared for more than 700 persons envenomated by rattlesnakes. . . ." The "we" in the sentence should have been footnoted to include Findlay Russell, MD, PhD. Our research on rattlesnake bites was performed in collaboration with Dr Russell and the majority of the clinical experience comes from Dr Russell and his colleagues at the University of Southern California (Dr Russell is currently at the University of Arizona). I am sorry if any misunderstanding developed because of this lack of reference.

STEVEN R. GARFIN, MD  
Assistant Professor of Surgery  
University of California Medical Center  
San Diego

#### REFERENCE

1. Garfin SR: Rattlesnake bites: Current hospital therapy, *In* Important advances in clinical medicine—Orthopedics (Epitomes of Progress). *West J Med* 1982 Nov; 137:411-412

### More on Video Display Terminals

TO THE EDITOR: In the November 1982 issue there appeared a letter by Dr E. R. W. Fox talking about VDT's (video display terminals).<sup>1</sup> He cited a Spokane, Washington, newspaper article dealing with women who had worked with VDT's and had adverse outcomes of pregnancy. In it he makes a comment and I quote, "Yet everyone knows that the cathode tubes and VDT's do emit several forms of radiation." He then goes on to raise the question, "Should VDT operators wear lead aprons?"

As an occupational physician, I must take exception to Dr Fox's reliance on the story from a lay publication. Data do exist regarding these issues. For example,

the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health—the branch of the United States Public Health Service charged with evaluating potential risks in the work environment—issued a report on the subject. It is entitled "Report on Electromagnetic Radiation Surveys of Video Display Terminals." In it, they cite not only their work, but several other studies indicating that the levels of x-ray exposure were in many cases less than the background natural radiation from walls and floors. A number of other researchers have concluded that the emission levels for a variety of forms of radiation are far below any current standards or bio-effects thresholds.

The important consideration is what are the rates of occurrence of various health effects in an exposed population. These must be compared with those of an appropriate control population to see if there is truly an increase. Sporadic occurrences do not necessarily have any significance and are only used for stimulating more definitive research.

Especially in hospitals where these persons had worked, the current data do not seem to support Dr Fox's suggestion that VDT operators should wear lead aprons.

DANIEL F. RUBIN, MD  
Los Angeles

#### REFERENCE

1. Fox ERW: High rock, high tech and Karl Marx (Correspondence). *West J Med* 1982 Nov; 137:441-442

### Action Against Sexually Transmitted Diseases

TO THE EDITOR: Even in our "free" and open society there are topics that are not openly discussed. Chief among these is sexuality. I am sure that this is the reason that we have not faced the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases in the same way as we are campaigning against a mild childhood illness like measles. True, the press has now caught on and is having fun sensationally bandying about herpes and AIDS (autoimmune deficiency syndrome), but where are the responsible medical authorities and our government?

We physicians, who see, treat and spend so much time with the distraught victims of these preventable diseases, should long ago have demanded vigorous public health intervention and public education. This is not to downplay the dedicated local health authorities who have for a long time fought a good fight with their sleuthing and epidemiological workups. But we know it is not working because the problem is worsening.

Now, we could sit around and blame it all on *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. This in some ways may be right. But that does not solve the already present and worsening problem. I suggest a more general public health and education campaign, which would have the added benefit of helping our citizens to feel more comfortable with the fact that, yes, they are sexual beings. Corollary to this we know that even the more general use of condoms would be of great help.

EDWARD C. SARGENT III, MD  
Shedd, Oregon